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find interest in the description of the system, such as it is, of assessments for local improvements.

Finally, it should be added that while the book treats primarily of Prussian law, in more than one instance the author wanders farther afield and includes within his observation the law of Germany in general. Here, however, the treatment is not so full and the citations, which are very numerous in the purely Prussian portion of the work, fail almost entirely.

F. J. G.

*L'Europe et la Révolution Française.* Par ALBERT SOREL. Première Partie, Les Mœurs Politiques et les Traditions ; Deuxième Partie, La Chute de la Royauté ; Troisième Partie, La Guerre aux Rois, 1792-1793. Paris, Librairie Plon, 1887, 1889, 1891.—562, 574, 556 pp.

The time has come when the great democratic upheaval of the last century can be studied in a truly scientific spirit. So long as democracy was by one party admired as altogether good, and by all others condemned as wholly bad, this was impossible. But now that the critical period has been reached, it is no longer necessary that writers should assume either the attitude of Burke or that of Thiers. A tone of impartial criticism, rather than one of apology or of indiscriminating censure, is now demanded. The great works of von Sybel and Taine have met this requirement with a high degree of success. A half-century ago de Tocqueville pointed out the way through which to reach conclusions of truly scientific value in this field. M. Sorel evidently recognizes him as a master and, guided by his spirit, reaches equally gratifying results. Unlike Taine, M. Sorel has treated the revolution from the standpoint of diplomatic relations, and has perhaps shown greater sympathy with the movement as a whole. His work is the French counterpart of von Sybel's great history. The German has drawn more largely from the archives and original documents ; the Frenchman has introduced into his volumes more material derived from the memoirs and general political literature of the period. By using the two works together it becomes possible to see how the same events look when viewed from opposite banks of the Rhine.

To M. Sorel the revolution was the natural outgrowth of the previous history of Europe. Therefore he reaches his point of view by a detailed study in the first volume of the ideas and policy prevailing under the old régime. He finds that during that period Europe was destitute of ideals. Political expediency was the principle of action ; intrigue and force were the means. The objects deemed most ex-

pedient were not those which would contribute to social well-being, but those which gratified the ambitions of dynasties. Conquest was the prime object of policy, wars waged for that purpose being supplemented by an unscrupulous diplomacy, by partitions and, if necessary, by the dethronement of monarchs. The author sees in the War of the Austrian Succession and in the partition of Poland the last will and testament of old Europe.

The enlightened monarchs, Frederick II and Joseph II, contributed to the overthrow of the existing system because they attacked both by word and deed its most cherished traditions. But the ideas from which reform was to proceed originated in France. The reason for this was not that the evils of the old régime were greater there than elsewhere, but that France, through the more complete ruin of feudalism, had advanced to a higher degree of unity than any other continental state. The object of the revolution was to subordinate political expediency to the rules of social order as ascertained by the reason; it was not to destroy the state but to control the exercise of its sovereignty in the interest of the people. Political liberty must be secured, and all other benefits would follow in its train. In France the revolution would then result in the perfecting of national unity. Abstractly considered, the object might be reached by a series of domestic reforms peacefully carried into execution. But in reality France had her traditions; she was situated in the midst of Europe; her king was not a man who was able to put himself at the head of the democracy and lead in the work of reform. Among the French traditions which now exerted great influence, were the feeling of opposition to Austria (which had been greatly strengthened by the losses of the Seven Years' War) and the desire to extend the national boundaries to those of ancient Gaul. Moreover, the ideas at the basis of the revolution were universal in character and led to the practical conclusion that democracy was the proper form of organization and government for all states. Hence there existed a tendency toward propagandism. Owing to the lack of proper leadership, it was necessary that the revolution should proceed to extremes in France. The kingship was hopelessly discredited from the first. The Girondists, in order to keep themselves in power, sought to gratify the demand for natural boundaries. That brought the revolution into conflict with Europe, and the ideal of peaceful reform was abandoned. Those indeed who cherished this ideal had forgotten that France had a history.

The European courts failed to realize the significance of events in France. They were busy with their former plans until forced to prepare for attack. They then thought to crush the movement by conquest, and by exchanges of territory to indemnify themselves for losses

incurred in the effort. This was the traditional mode of procedure and it had worked well in the case of small and less consolidated states. But when applied to France it roused the spirit of nationality to a passion. The thought of liberty was lost in that of unity. On the plea that the republic was in danger one faction after another was overthrown, till the Jacobins were installed in power. They were allowed in the name of liberty to commit the most atrocious crimes, while the nation armed itself for defence and for the recovery of the Gallic boundaries. In the army of 1792 and 1793 the author finds the noblest expression of the revolutionary spirit.

But the true ideals of the revolution had been already forgotten. Its leaders had adopted the policy of the old régime. They now relied upon force—upon conquests, partitions and, if need be, dethronements. As they were backed by the enthusiastic support of the nation, they could carry out this policy upon a scale much larger than had been possible for the older monarchies. In this we see the reaction of Europe upon the revolution, essentially changing its objects and methods. The love of military glory became stronger than at any time since the crusades. The old hatred of England flamed up anew. It was believed that England not only must be but could be destroyed, the latter conviction being based on a notion inherited from the previous century that the island kingdom was rent with dissensions. The traditional jealousies of Austria and Prussia, the weakness of the small states of the Empire, the complications arising from the Polish and the Eastern questions, themselves an inheritance from past centuries, furnished additional temptations to the French to abandon their original purposes and to become armed propagandists. Europe was paid in its own coin, but at the same time the cause of the revolution was hopelessly lost. New social, political and intellectual forces were set to work, however, which in later times and under more favorable conditions were to produce throughout Europe the results at which the early revolutionists aimed.

These, if the reviewer has interpreted them aright, are the leading thoughts in M. Sorel's work. He has shown with great clearness the character of the environment within which the revolution had its origin; he is now showing with equal thoroughness the effects which that environment produced upon the revolution during its successive stages. To my knowledge no previous writer has treated the subject from just this standpoint. For this reason we have in these volumes a most important contribution toward the correct understanding of a great episode in the history of France and of Europe.

HERBERT L. OSGOOD.